

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 13, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF THE SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE ON THE BLIGHTING INFLUENCES PROGRAM AND CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE LIST OF BLIGHTING INFLUENCES

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the semi-annual update on the Blighting Influences Program and consideration of an amendment to the List of Blighting Influences to remove the property at 329½ North Henry Street.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council receive the report and approve the deletion of one property, 329½ North Henry Street, from the currently approved List of Blighting Influences.

**BACKGROUND:** The purpose of the Blighting Influences Program is to encourage the removal of blight by requiring owners of blighted properties to make needed improvements. The program operates in the Potomac East Conservation District, Southwest Quadrant Rehabilitation District, and Potomac West Neighborhood Strategy Area. Once a property is added to the Blighting Influences List, the owner is sent a 60/60 Day Notice which informs them that they have: (1) 60 days to obtain building permits to complete the necessary repairs to their property and to submit a rehabilitation schedule to the Office of Housing; and (2) an additional 60 days to begin rehabilitation of their property. These 60 day periods may be extended for circumstances (insurance claim settlement, estate settlement, loan application process, owner's health, etc.) which prevent an owner from complying within the established time limits.

Office of Housing staff monitors rehabilitation progress of properties included on the Blighting Influences List. Failure of the owners to comply with the terms of the 60/60 Day Notice or failure to pursue the completion of rehabilitation will place the property in noncompliance. Owners of properties in noncompliance are contacted and encouraged to resume rehabilitation activity.

If an owner refuses to resume rehabilitation activity, acquisition proceedings are initiated against the property. An independent general real estate appraiser is commissioned to ascertain the property's value. An offer to purchase the property is issued to the owner. If accepted, the City acquires the property. If the offer is rejected, and the owner still refuses to resume rehabilitation activity, City Council is asked to approve a Resolution authorizing the acquisition of the property through its power of eminent domain. Once a Resolution is approved, the City Attorney institutes eminent domain proceedings and acquires the property.

Acquired properties may be: 1) rehabilitated by the City under the Blighting Influences Program for sale to a low/moderate-income family under the City's Homeownership Assistance Program; 2) sold to the private sector in "As Is" condition for rehabilitation-redevelopment; or 3) transferred to a City agency for use as a public facility or sale or lease to a non-profit corporation for a City-supported purpose. A description of the program and a summary of program activity to date are provided in Attachment I.

**DISCUSSION:** No properties are being recommended for addition to the List of Blighting Influences during this List update. The properties proposed for continuation on and deletion from the currently approved List of Blighting Influences are listed in Attachment II (Potomac East Conservation and Southwest Quadrant Rehabilitation Districts) and Attachment III (Potomac West Neighborhood Strategy Area). A status report on the properties proposed for continuation on the currently approved List of Blighting Influences is provided in Attachment V (Status of Properties Continuing on the List of Blighting Influences from Former Years). We are recommending the deletion of one property in Potomac East, since it has been rehabilitated and is no longer a blighting influence as detailed in the supporting documentation section of this report (Attachment IV):

329½ North Henry Street

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- ATTACHMENT I: Background and Summary of Program to Date
- ATTACHMENT II: Summary of Blighting Influences - Potomac East
- ATTACHMENT III: Summary of Blighting Influences - Potomac West
- ATTACHMENT IV: Supporting Documentation
- ATTACHMENT V: Status of Properties Continuing on the List of Blighting Influences from Former Years

**STAFF:**

Arthur C. Thomas, Real Estate Officer, Office of Housing  
Quentin E. Tabscott, Inspector, Code Enforcement  
Shane Cochran, Chief, Program Implementation Division, Office of Housing  
Robert C. Eiffert, Deputy Director, Office of Housing  
Arthur D. Dahlberg, Director, Code Enforcement  
Mildrilyn Stephens Davis, Director, Office of Housing

## BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF PROGRAM TO DATE

I. Semi-Annual Procedures for Updating the List of Blighting Influences

The Code Enforcement Bureau is responsible for the preparation of the list of additions to and deletions from the currently approved List of Blighting Influences in the Potomac East Conservation and Southwest Quadrant Rehabilitation Districts and the Potomac West Neighborhood Strategy Area (NSA). Prior to a reorganization of Code Enforcement functions in 1984, the Alexandria Health Department performed this function.

In 1986, the Community Development Block Grant Advisory Committee and City Council approved an amendment to the Blighting Influences Program to provide for semi-annual additions to and deletions from the Blighting Influences List. Previously, the Blighting Influences List was updated annually. Properties to be added to the List must have been placarded and/or ordered secured by January 31 and July 31 of each year.

Properties are recommended for deletion from the List after they have been rehabilitated or demolished, and cleared by the Code Enforcement Bureau. In addition, properties which have not been completely rehabilitated may be recommended for deletion from the List if circumstances are such that the blight has been removed.

II. Removal of Blight

Owners of all properties added to the Blighting Influences List receive notices giving them deadlines to obtain building permits and begin rehabilitation. The Office of Housing monitors the progress of the rehabilitation (or demolition) efforts. If an owner's actions are not satisfactory, the Office of Housing then takes steps to acquire the property. Additionally, properties on the Blighting Influences List, which have at least one year of outstanding real estate taxes, will be referred to the Finance Department for tax foreclosure.

III. Program Progress

Since the Blighting Influences Program (formerly the Vacant and Boarded Program) was first approved by City Council in December 1975, 386 residential and commercial properties have been placed on the List of Blighting Influences in the Potomac East and Potomac West areas of the City for possible acquisition and subsequent resale. As of this List update, 339 properties have been rehabilitated (or demolished) by the owners, 2 properties have been eliminated by a program or boundary change, 37 properties have been acquired by the City and 8 properties are currently being monitored by the City to effect the elimination of blight by their owners.

The following is a status report on the 37 properties acquired by the City to date:

- A. Twelve properties acquired under this program fall under the "Rehabilitation for Resale to Low- and Moderate - Income Family" program. These properties were rehabilitated or demolished and rebuilt, and then sold to low- and moderate-income families.
- B. Three properties were subdivided to create a total of eight new or rehabilitated properties. In two cases, two properties were created from one, and in the third case, four properties resulted from one. All were sold to low- and moderate-income families.
- C. Two adjacent former blighting influences were combined and rehabilitated for the City's Battered Women's Shelter.
- D. The site of a former Potomac West gas station was acquired and resold by the City to a developer, who constructed nine housing units on this site.
- E. Seventeen properties acquired under this program fall under the "As Is" resale program. Three properties were sold and have been rehabilitated or demolished.
- F. One property was rehabilitated for use as a State licensed home for elderly persons. The City also used program funds to acquire the adjacent structure, which was not on the Blighting Influences List, to create one large home from the two adjoining properties.
- G. The W&OD right-of-way is currently used as a park and recreational area.

Through the implementation of the Blighting Influences Program, including the "As Is" resale program, the City has played an important role in the elimination of blight in the Potomac East and Potomac West areas of the City and has provided housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons. The success and importance of this program have also been recognized by the Virginia Municipal League which chose the Blighting Influences Program (formerly the Vacant and Boarded Program) as the recipient of its 1980 Annual Achievement Award for the State.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE LIST OF BLIGHTING  
INFLUENCES IN THE POTOMAC EAST CONSERVATION AND SOUTHWEST  
QUADRANT REHABILITATION DISTRICTS - MARCH 2003

I. Potomac East Conservation District

A. Vacant and Boarded Residential Structures

1. Continuing from former years:

622½ North Alfred Street

1733 Cameron Street

437 Earl Street

1024 Queen Street

1018 Wythe Street

1020 Wythe Street

2. Additions:

None

3. Deletions:

329½ North Henry Street

B. Other Blighting Influences

1. Continuing from former years:

None

2. Additions:

None

3. Deletions:

None

II. Southwest Quadrant Rehabilitation District

A. Vacant and Boarded Residential Structures

1. Continuing from former years:

None

2. Additions:

None

3. Deletions:

None

B. Other Blighting Influences

1. Continuing from former years:

None

2. Additions:

None

3. Deletions:

None

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE LIST OF BLIGHTING  
INFLUENCES IN THE POTOMAC WEST NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY  
AREA - MARCH 2003

- I. Potomac West Conservation District
  - A. Vacant and Boarded Residential Structures
    - 1. Continuing from former years:  
None
    - 2. Additions:  
None
    - 3. Deletions:  
None
  - B. Other Blighting Influences
    - 1. Continuing from former years:  
None
    - 2. Additions:  
None
    - 3. Deletions:  
None
- II. Potomac West Rehabilitation District
  - A. Vacant and Boarded Residential Structures
    - 1. Continuing from former years:  
None
    - 2. Additions:  
None
    - 3. Deletions:  
None
  - B. Other Blighting Influences
    - 1. Continuing from former years:  
None
    - 2. Additions:  
None
    - 3. Deletions:  
None
- III. Remainder of Potomac West
  - A. Vacant and Boarded Residential Structures
    - 1. Continuing from former years:  
3821 Elbert Avenue  
2930 Hickory Street
    - 2. Additions:  
None
    - 3. Deletions:  
None

B. Other Blighting Influences

1. Continuing from former years:

None

2. Additions:

None

3. Deletions:

None

DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING CONDITIONS OF THE PROPERTIES PROPOSED  
FOR ADDITION TO AND DELETION FROM THE LIST OF BLIGHTING INFLUENCES



CODE ENFORCEMENT

P. O. Box 178  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Arthur D. Dahlberg  
Director

Phone (703) 838-4360  
Fax (703) 838-3880  
ci.alexandria.va.us

October 24, 2002

Mr. Michael C. Landi  
1007 Queen Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Landi:

A reinspection of your property at 329½ North Henry Street, by Inspector Calvin D. Watson on **October 23, 2002**, revealed that all violations which led to the declaration of your property as unfit for human habitation have been corrected.

The property is now suitable for habitation.

Should you have any questions please call Inspector Watson at (703) 838-4644, ext. 120.

Sincerely,

  
Arthur D. Dahlberg  
Director

cc: Charles E. Samarra, Police Chief  
Jim Gower, Deputy Fire Chief  
Arthur Thomas, Office of Housing  
Mary Bryant, Supervisor, Existing Structures  
Quentin Tabscott, Inspector, Existing Structures  
Michael Conner, Chief Fire Marshal

STATUS OF PROPERTIES CONTINUING ON THE LIST OF BLIGHTING INFLUENCES  
FROM FORMER YEARS

I. POTOMAC EAST CONSERVATION AND SOUTHWEST QUADRANT  
REHABILITATION DISTRICT PROPERTIES

622½ N. Alfred Street

Added to BI List:

Fall 2001

Current Status:

In Compliance

Progress:

The owner has filed his applications for building permits and is making progress toward the rehabilitation of this property. Rehabilitation of this structure is anticipated to be complete in April 2003.

Projected Clearance:

September 2003

Items to Complete:

Complete repairs and obtain certificate of occupancy.

1733 Cameron Street

Added to BI List:

Fall 2001

Current Status:

In Compliance

Progress:

This property has been sold. The new owner has cleared the property in preparation for rehabilitation. The owner is pursuing contractor estimates and expects to begin construction in April 2003 and be completed by October 2003.

Projected Clearance:

March 2004

Items to Complete:

Obtain estimates, complete repairs and obtain certificate of occupancy for the property.

437 Earl Street

Added to BI List:

March 1997

Current Status:

In Compliance

Progress:

This property has been sold. The new owner has cleared the property and rehabilitation work has commenced. Rehabilitation is projected to be completed by August 2003.

Projected Clearance:

September 2003

Items to Complete:

Complete repairs and obtain certificate of occupancy for the property.

1024 Queen Street

Added to BI List:

Current Status:

Progress:

September 1989

In Compliance

Acquisition proceedings have been suspended against this property. The owner continues to make rehabilitation progress at this property. Rehabilitation is projected to be complete in April 2003.

Projected Clearance:

Items to Complete:

September 2003

Owner to complete rehabilitation.

1018 Wythe Street

Added to BI List:

Current Status:

Progress:

March 1989

In Compliance

Acquisition proceedings against this property have been suspended. Patrick Monahan has obtained building permits to complete the rehabilitation of this property. Rehabilitation of this property had been delayed pending the demolition of 1022 Wythe Street. 1022 Wythe Street has been demolished and rehabilitation of 1018 Wythe Street has resumed and is expected to be completed by April 2003.

Projected Clearance:

Items to Complete:

September 2003

System finals and interior finishes.

1020 Wythe Street

Added to BI List:

Current Status:

Progress:

March 1989

In Compliance

Acquisition proceedings against this property have been suspended. Patrick Monahan has obtained building permits to complete the rehabilitation of this property. Rehabilitation of this property had been delayed pending the demolition of 1022 Wythe Street. 1022 Wythe Street has been demolished and rehabilitation of 1020 Wythe Street has resumed and is expected to be completed April 2003.

Projected Clearance:

Items to Complete:

September 2003

System finals and interior finishes.

## II. POTOMAC WEST NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY AREA PROPERTIES

3821 Elbert Avenue

Added to BI List:

September 1999

Current Status:

In Compliance

Progress:

A guardian has been appointed for the owner of this property. The guardian has applied for a City sponsored Home Rehabilitation Loan Program loan to assist him in rehabilitating the existing structure for the owner. The rehabilitation is anticipated to be completed by December 2003.

Projected Clearance:

March 2004

Items to Complete:

Complete feasibility study. Rehabilitate existing structure as indicated by the study.

2930 Hickory Street

Added to BI List:

September 2001

Current Status:

In Compliance

Progress:

The owner of this property has obtained a City sponsored Home Rehabilitation Loan Program loan. Rehabilitation of the property was initiated in February 2003 and is expected to be complete by July 2003.

Projected Clearance:

September 2003

Items to Complete:

Complete rehabilitation and obtain certificate of occupancy for the property.